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Wednesday 24 July ~~ABF~~
460111

China Medical
Commission

(RAL)

Dear Ivan:

On this third night of sitting up all night the lights are bright, the coffee compelling, and with diary up-to-date, and the hope brightening that we shall get to SF by Thursday, there seems both point and time to write.

The trip has gone well. Without air planes we could have done either less or longer. Planes took us from Nanking to Peiping, Peiping to Kalgan and back, Peiping to Chengtu, Chengtu to Chungking, Chungking to Nanking, Nanking to Shanghai, and now via Guam, Kwajalein, Johnson and Hawaii. This last set of jumps have been the least comfortable and the least dependable but I hope for luck in getting out of Honolulu ahead of the atomic bomb BIPs, and if we do that all will be well. It was interesting to learn that if we have trouble tonight on this flight we are to try to avoid returning to Kwajalein, and a plane that left Guam was called back after being four hours out. Just another example of the infinity of rumors or unexplained facts that characterize life without newspapers, as it has been so much of the time since May 8.

China presents as complicated a set of variables as one could expect. It was, as I half thought it would be, an exposure to China in a whirlwind of changes and we are quite clear that even though our picture becomes progressively out of date the chance of some economic and political improvement is the only chance that will save our making a very guarded report indeed. So I do not see a special meeting of the Trustees indicated for September or October. Our first draft of a report was sweated out in Shanghai and we shall have a revision for Loucks to take on for typing in NY. I'd rather have no office circulation till I get back but Loucks will be a good judge if any peculiar demand for it occurs. The more I've thought it over the more sense I see in telephoning you from San Francisco so I'll shorten further comment that would be superfluous to a conversation.

Your interest and perspicacity in social and political matters would have been pleasant to profit from here in China. There seemed to me to be a very complicated set of conditions all piled up on each other: fundamentally of course the Chinese capacity to absorb anything within reach, then the usual peace time poverty, and an acute war time poverty, plus inflation, plus distrust of those who dealt with the Japs, plus impatience with their own political quarrels, plus slowly increasing boredom with so much that is American and gratitude to America and some lively hopes.

One or two tales that tell a good deal. The engineer Todd who is in charge of getting the Yellow River back to its old bed reports that the main difficulty is no longer a matter of engineering. It is the political job of getting the Chinese farmers who have settled in the river bed to cede this good early and let river come back where it belongs. I think one reason the Chinese don't think much about the welfare of the mass is that they've never seen a group of people small enough to be a manageable group - except perhaps their family. The train wreck story I stuck in the diary. I've got to a better understanding with Balfour - I think the Indian collapse has sobered him a bit. I am certainly glad we didn't open up a Pandora's box there.

I'll see Dolman in BC and be back just after Labor Day. Don't know exact plans yet. Thanks for your very kind help to Eleanor. She wrote me most appreciatively.

As ever

AG